

(7) In section 12(b)(1), strike "7" and insert "6".

The Senate concurrent resolution was concurred in.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SCHEDULING OF MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON RULES FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 18, AND FILING OF AMENDMENTS ON ANTITERRORISM ACT

(Mr. SOLOMON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I had announced that the Committee on Rules would be holding a meeting of the Committee on Rules on H.R. 1710, the Antiterrorism Act. The hearing on that has been delayed until Monday at 5 p.m. There will be a meeting of the Committee on Rules this coming Monday at 5 p.m., and Members are again reminded that amendments to that legislation must be filed with the Committee on Rules no later than 4 o'clock this afternoon. That time still stands, and I would hope that Members on that side of the aisle in particular might notify their Members of the timing of those amendments being filed with our Committee on Rules.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1996

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules I call up House Resolution 307 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 307

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 1530) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1996 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 1996, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York [Mr. SOLOMON] is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas [Mr. FROST], a member of the Committee on Rules, pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of the rule, all time yielded is for purposes of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution is a rule providing for consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 1530, the fiscal 1996 Defense authorization bill. The rule waives all points of order against the conference report, as usual in this circumstance, and against its consideration, and was reported out of the Committee on Rules by a voice

vote. I urge adoption of the rule so we can get on with the debate and passage of this long-awaited most essential piece of legislation.

I would like to commend the chairman, the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. SPENCE], and his outstanding staff for the tireless work they have put in this year, and especially during this very long conference, which has gone on for months now. We all know that that was not easy.

Mr. Speaker, we must pass this legislation today, and the President must sign it into law, especially this President who is putting our troops over into Bosnia as we stand here right now.

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Mr. Speaker, this authorization bill is the first step in restoring our defenses to the level that they should be as the world's superpower.

We all know that the defense budget has endured 10 years of cuts in a row, 10 years. Real defense spending has declined over 40 percent since 1985, and it is beginning to show in the recruitment of good young men and women throughout this country. During that time, procurement has declined an astounding 71 percent, and this must stop; and this bill does stop it.

Indeed, 2 years ago President Clinton said that we must not cut our defenses any further. That was 2 years ago. He was right then, and we are right today. Here is the bill that makes good on that pledge.

That bill is for this year, 1996. The President's request, over last year, so we are now turning it around. As the deployment to Bosnia takes place, as we speak, this budget should be over the President's request, because, Mr. Speaker, that mission is going to cost billions of dollars, billions of dollars which will be drained out of our appropriation for maintaining a military that can meet the demands of our strategic interests across the world.

This bill adds \$5 billion to the President's procurement request, including monies to keep open the industrial baselines for the all-important B-2 bomber and the new generation of submarines.

Mr. Speaker, our military personnel who are about to put their lives on the line in Bosnia are well taken care of in this bill. This bill provides a 2.4-percent pay raise, a 5.2-percent increase in the basic housing allowances, improved health care provisions, and many other items specifically for individual members of our Armed Forces.

Mr. Speaker, this bill finally reverses the outrageous, outrageous attempt in 1993 when military COLA's were unfairly delayed beyond civilian COLA's. What a terrible thing that was to do to our military. I know many Members on both sides of the aisle have worked hard for this day, and I am glad to report that it is finally here. We are turning that around.

In this bill, readiness and training accounts, so critical for operational

successes, are also increased substantially. But importantly, Mr. Speaker, this bill, despite its increases, stays within the limits of the 7-year balanced budget. That is what is so terribly important. It does this substantially by reducing the nondefense items that have been weighing down this bill over the last few years, items such as foreign aid that never should have been in this bill, peacekeeping and environmental restoration that never should have been in this bill. They belong in other accounts, not in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, there is no more important bill in our annual process than the defense authorization bill. That is why we formed these republic States forming this great country of ours, to provide first and foremost, above all else, for a common defense of this Nation. This is the one bill that is constitutionally mandated and benefits all of the people of this great country.

This year's bill is critical if America is to maintain its leadership role in the world, as I think it should; and as our young men and women go into Bosnia, we must give them all of the support we can, make no mistake about it. We went through a lot of votes on bills yesterday and the other day to support our troops. This is a bill that supports our troops. This gives them the wherewithal to go in with the best equipment, the best training that they possibly can, and that is what will save the lives of individual men and women serving in our military today.

So this is one Christmas present that we can give them. Come over here and vote for this rule and then vote for this bill. My colleagues will be glad they did.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this rule which provides for the consideration of the conference report to accompany the fiscal year 1996 Department of Defense authorization.

While there are matters contained in this conference agreement which I oppose, I will, however, support the agreement because it does address many matters of vital national security interest. I strongly support the funding made available for the B-2 Stealth bomber, and I especially support the initiatives taken by the conferees to accelerate high-priority quality of life projects for the men and women of our Armed Forces and their families. These projects are critical if we are to maintain a viable all-volunteer force, and especially so in light of the missions we have and will call upon our military personnel to perform. Finally, I am gratified that this conference report addresses the issue of core readiness and fully funds operations and maintenance accounts. Our military forces are by far the best equipped and trained in the world, but this conference report goes a long way toward assuring that they will remain so as we pass into the new century.